

contested the right of her accusers to act as judges. The strength of the Western Powers was enhanced by the conclusion of mutual assistance pacts by Russia with France on May 2 and with Czechoslovakia on May 16. Looking around Europe in the early summer of 1935 'it seemed that, whatever danger the new Germany might present, there were ample means to cope with it. For the first time since 1917 Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia appeared to be marching in step, and the sympathies of the Little Entente were not in doubt. Germany stood alone, though, since the Ten Year Pact of Peace and non-aggression of January 1934, Poland was no longer reckoned with certainty among her potential foes. Yet this appearance of solidarity was an illusion, and in a few months the whole landscape was transformed.

The Stresa front was quickly dented by a thrust from an unexpected quarter. Germany had passed the stage of weakness in which her policy could be controlled by her conquerors, and British statesmen no longer made the attempt. Her equality of status within a system of general security had been recognized in 1932 ; and though in 1935 security for all seemed further away than ever, her new position had come to be tacitly accepted by the average Englishman without waiting for the fulfilment of the qualifying condition. When the naval clauses of the Treaty of Versailles went the way of the military and air limitations, we felt a tremor of apprehension and joined in the Geneva protest, but it was clear that we had to make the best of a bad job. Accordingly, when the German Government proposed to adopt a naval strength of a little more than a third of our own, we promptly concurred. Refusal would have renewed the rivalry and revived the alarms of the pre-war era. It was generally agreed that the

British Government had no choice ; for the totals—3 5 per cent, of British strength, with the right to equality in submarines, though Germany promised not to exceed 45 per cent, without notice—were as favourable as we could expect. Moreover, since the size of the German fleet depended on that of our own, we could keep it at a low level if our partner in the pact kept her word.

Though the practical advantages of the agreement were obvious in Whitehall, it aroused surprise and resentment abroad. France was informed of what was taking place, but there was no question of effective consultation or sharing in the pact. To the logical French mind it was a paradox that in